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Diplo front also active

Washington (AP)—Argentine Foreign Minister Nicanor Costa Mendez, in Washington for talks with Secretary of State Haig, said the British capture of South Georgia Island would have "very grave consequences for peace," and the State Department said the incident demonstrated "the urgency of a diplomatic solution" of the Falklands crisis.

Costa Mendez said he was "very much surprised" by the British action, which occurred on the eve of an Organization of American States foreign ministers meeting to consider urging Britain to lift its blockade of the disputed islands.

The OAS meeting in Washington was not expected to lead to direct sanctions against Britain. OAS Secretary General Alejandro Orfila said he was optimistic about the possibility of a negotiated settlement.

Speaking in Miami, Orfila left open the possibility the OAS may not take sides in the dispute, saying the ministers need not take any formal action. He also said he "sympathized" with the

neutral position of the United States as it seeks to negotiate a settlement.

A resolution proposed by Argentina and other Latin American states would invoke the 1947 Rio Treaty, which calls upon all signatories to come to the aid of a member state under attack. But it does not contain a key aspect of a United Nations resolution supported by the U.S.—a call for Argentina's withdrawal from the Falklands.

TWENTY-ONE OF THE 30 OAS nations, including the U.S., have signed the Rio Treaty.

Before Costa Mendez scheduled meeting with Haig yesterday, State Department spokesman Sondra McCarty said the U.S. "remains committed" to a diplomatic solution. "We will continue with our ongoing efforts," she said, adding that Britain did not consult with or inform the U.S. before recapturing South Georgia Island.

Costa Mendez, asked whether diplomacy is at an end now that shots have been fired, said, "Diplomacy has no ends."

British Ambassador Nicholas Henderson told ABC-TV's "This Week with David Brinkley" that Britain and Argentina are "by no means at the end of the negotiation."

He added, however, that Argentina will begin to negotiate seriously "when they realize they can't leave their forces with impunity on the islands."

IN A SEPARATE interview, Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John Tower (R-Tex.) said he believes the U.S. has "no moral or practical option than to support Great Britain" in the event of a war.

And Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) agreed in an interview on CBS' "Face the Nation" that the U.S. would have to "tilt" toward Britain if it has to choose sides.

Tower said he does not believe U.S. support for the British should be open-ended. He said it should be limited to supplying the British with "intelligence and surveillance" information.

Jackson said it is clear the U.S. is closer to Britain than Argentina, but he suggested the U.S. should not provide Britain with either direct or indirect military aid at this time.